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From: Margie Huoppi <mhuoppi@att.net>
Sent: Tuesday, April 02, 2013 10:44 PM
To: Jud Testimony
Subject: Opposition to House Bill 6690

April 2, 2013

Sen. Eric D. Coleman and Rep. Gerald M. Fox, Chairmen
Joint Committee on Judiciary
Room 2500, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT, 06106

I am writing to express my deep concern over Connecticut House Bill 6690. As a long-time owner of dogs and horses, I feel it is inappropriate for an animal to be represented by anyone other than its owners. This bill could have far-reaching consequences on the legal status of animals in the state of Connecticut.

I believe we currently have negligence and cruelty laws, and those should be fully enforced. However, the creation of court-appointed animal advocates as provided in HB 6690 will result in legal controversies about who is responsible for an animal, and will ultimately impact the ability and rights of pet owners to freely choose the most appropriate course of care and treatment for their pets.

Pets are considered the property of their owners, and it is the owners who have the responsibility to care for them. They are animals – not human beings. They are not children, even if they are loved and treated as cherished family members. However, under the provisions of HB 6690, individual owners would lose dominion over their animals by having to share those rights with courts and third parties. As a result, appointees could use the courts to force a person to make decisions that they believe to not be in the best interest of their animal. Additionally, providing for such advocates, who are usually reserved to protect the interests of minors or other people lacking legal capacity, may fundamentally impact their legal status as property.

I would not want someone from the outside interfering with the decisions I make about my pets. Last fall one of my dogs got suddenly very ill and was diagnosed with something similar to emphysema. I made the decision to relieve his suffering by having him euthanized. I did not want to put him through stressful treatment that had no guarantees. What would have happened if someone decided my decision was wrong? While the dog was suffering and getting worse, should an advocate or the court decide to send the dog to Tufts University Animal Hospital, put him in an oxygen chamber, and undergo other extremely expensive treatment?

This is the type of unintended consequence the passage of this bill could have. Please reconsider the consequences of this bill and put your efforts into the enforcement of current animal cruelty laws.

Sincerely yours,

Margie Huoppi
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